

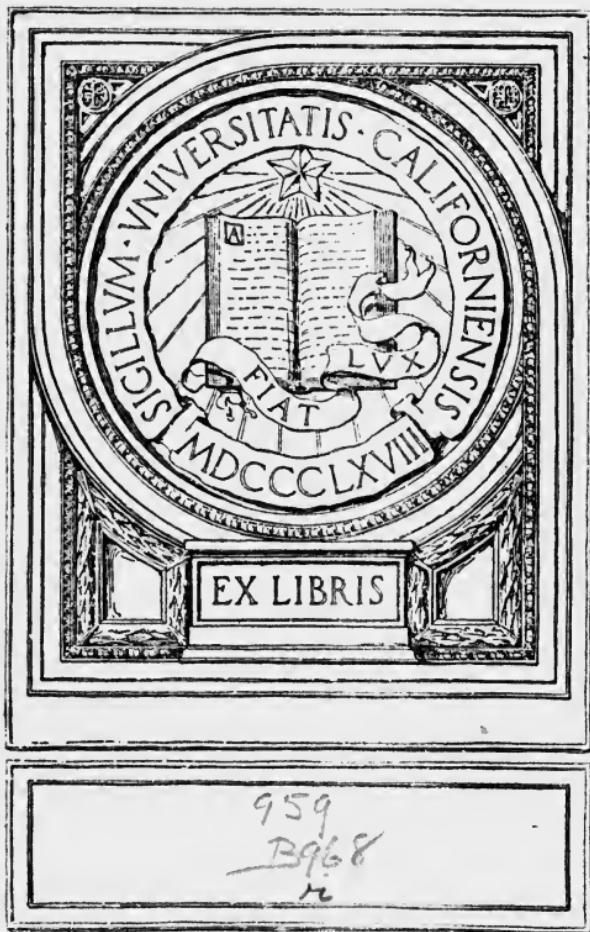
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THE ROADSIDE FIRE

—
AMELIA JOSEPHINE BURR



THE ROADSIDE FIRE

“And this shall be for music
when none else is near,
“The sweet song for singing, the
rare song to hear,
“That only I remember and only
you admire,
“Of the broad Road that stretches
and the Roadside Fire.”

R. L. S.

The
Roadside Fire
by
Amelia Josephine Burr



New York
George H. Doran Company

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70-320
A.D. 1912, N.Y.

To
M Y F A T H E R A N D M O T H E R

345091

A number of the poems in this volume are here included through the courtesy of the publishers of The Century Magazine, Scribner's Magazine, The Bellman, The Designer, Hampton's, St. Nicholas, The Catholic World, Harper's Bazaar, Everybody's Magazine, and Putnam's Magazine, in which magazines they first appeared.

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T H E R O A D S I D E F I R E

TO THOSE WHO TAKE
THE ROAD

YE comrades of the coming time
Whose faces I foresee,
These little roadside fires of rhyme
Are all you know of me.

I LEAVE you as I pass along
A swiftly fading spark;
The echo of a marching song
That dies upon the dark;

BUT happy ere the glimmer die
Another's hand may light
A beacon where my embers lie,
To shout across the night.

OUTWARD BOUND

UNFADED, give them to the deep,
These flowers, the sweetest of the land.
See, as they fall, a billow leap
To clasp them in its great white hand!

NO morrow and no yesterday
For their frail loveliness may be,
Held like a pearl from earth's decay
By the imperishable Sea.

THE COMMON WAY

THERE'S an hour for each when the angels' speech

To the tongue of man is given —
When earth is crossed as at Pentecost
By the rushing fires of Heaven;
But the common way is for everyday,
And we common folk must face it
With a common smile for each common
 mile
And the little flowers that grace it.

✓
TO trudge and trust in the daily dust
 With a comrade tried and cheery,—
To lift the eyes to the heartening skies
When the plodding feet grow weary,
Is to bless the Road, and the hopes that
 goad
And the beckoning stars that guide me.
The common way that's for everyday
Is the way you walk beside me.

THE ROADSIDE FIRE

THE COMMON WAY (continued)

THE world must plod at the call of God

On a weary march and holy,

From best to best, toward an end unguessed,

But slowly — slowly — slowly.

So the lot we bear with all life we share,

And the Goal of all life's growing;

For the common way that's for everyday

Is the way of God's own going.

THE HAND OF GOD

(For the statue by Rodin in the Metropolitan Museum.)

THEY cannot understand
 What draws them each to each;
In vain they strive to tether
 With futile ties of speech
The hidden Power that caught them
 Despite themselves, and brought them
For joy or pain, together
 In bond too close for breach.

SOME struggle to withstand
 The closing fingers' might
That welds them all unwilling —
 And other lives unite
Dreaming in joy impassioned
 That they themselves have fashioned
Their destiny's fulfilling
 In all the Fates' despite.

THE ROADSIDE FIRE

THE HAND OF GOD (continued)

AND others the command
Obey, they know not why;
They find nor cross nor treasure —
They only live and die.
Men call it “love” — expressing
A truth beyond their guessing,
Since I no words can measure
Am Love, and Love is I.

IN my eternal Hand
I crush them silently,
Shaping the creature human
To ends it cannot see.
Unsparing and unwasting,
Relenting not nor hastening,
I mould of man and woman
The god that is to be.

THE DOLOUROUS WAY

SAD soul that criest in despair
And bitter pain,
Dost weep because thou needs must go
In laden weakness bending low?
I chose the burden that I bear,
Nor can complain.

IS it because thy feet have stained
With blood the way?
Why should I weep that I must tread
Upon the path which I have spread?
These are the shards of cups I drained
But yesterday.

THEN tell me why such grief is thine —
My agony
Is knowing all my penance vain
To clear the pathway of one pain
For those whose feet shall follow mine
In days to be.

CREDO

THIS thing I know: that from the wasted years

When shaken with false hopes and falser fears

My blinded heart to gods of clay was clinging,

Though trembling still from night's long fever-dream,

Forward, into the dawn's calm crescent beam

Now I go singing.

I KNOW not by what sovereign alchemy
God's transmutations must accomplished be,
Nor how the dunghill to the rose can waken,
But as one blossom types the tree, I know
As one soul grows, mankind from pain shall grow
To joy unshaken.

BORGLUM'S LINCOLN

FROM a shop-window that grand face surveys

The street's gay, piteous pageant; sad and great,

Set like a prophet in the market-place,

A man of sorrows and Grief's intimate,

He sees the old hypocrisy and shame,

Meanness and pride, surge past him still the same.

HIS dream was one with God's—a people freed;

A race of slaves his wistful eyes behold,

Shackled with ignorance and scourged by greed—

Yet in those eyes the dreams have not grown cold.

A younger brother of the Crucified,

He trusts in man the God for whom he died.

THE ROADSIDE FIRE

BORGLUM'S LINCOLN (continued)

FATHER, we pray thee in this holy place,
Here, in the city's turbulent midstream,
That we may turn from that majestic face
Touched with the patient passion of thy
Dream,
In the marred flotsam of the crowd to see
Thy miracle of Possibility.

WE HAVE PIPED UNTO YOU

(For a statue by Gutzon Borglum.)

HE piped to him first of the glory of youth;
“When its splendour
“Touches his eyelids like morning,” she
thought, “he will wake.”
But he heard not a sound of the sweetness
imploring and tender
She made for his sake.

THEN she piped him the lure of cold peaks
and the wilderness calling —
The mortal desire for the dim, unattainable
goal —
But she knew as she piped that her notes
like dead planets were falling
Through the night of his soul.

THE ROADSIDE FIRE

WE HAVE PIPED UNTO YOU (continued)

YET she piped once again; and of love was
the music she made him—

The love of Humanity linked with the love
of the One.

Dreaming, he smiled in his sleep and more
easily laid him.

And her piping was done.

SHE turned away silent — and lacking the
strain that had lulled him,

Keen stole the hush to his heart like the
search of a knife.

He stirred — he awoke — he arose from the
dreams that had dulled him
To anguish — and life.

THE TRUE ATLAS

(For the statue by Gutzon Borglum.)

NO sullen slave whose loth feet plod
Weighed down with burdens heavy piled,
Kneeling she lifts the world to God
As she would lift a child.

ALL Woman here the master's art
Has quickened in the sentient stone,
Since Motherhood is of the heart,
Not of the flesh alone.

THAT one whose body to her will
Has borne its fruitage bittersweet,
And she who craved in vain the thrill
Of wakening hands and feet,

SHE who has never held her own,
Except in dreams, upon her breast —
The mother who has proved and known,
And she who has but guessed,

THE ROADSIDE FIRE

THE TRUE ATLAS (continued)

UNITE in Her who raises earth
In her unwearying embrace,
And cherishes toward perfect worth
The childhood of our race.

MOTHER of Earth, sublimely fair
In thy prophetic ecstasy,
The travail of thy soul shall bear
The Heaven that is to be.

BATTLE-SONG OF FAILURE

WE strain toward Heaven and lay hold on Hell.

With starward eyes we stumble in hard ways,

And to the moments when we see life well
Succeeds the blindness of bewildered days,
But what of that? Into the sullen flesh
The soul drives home the spur with splen-
did sting.

Bleeding and soiled we gird ourselves afresh —

Forth, and make firm a highway for the King.

THE loveless greed the centuries have stored
In marshy foulness traps our faltering feet.
The sins of men whom punishment ignored
Like fever in our weakened pulses beat,
But what of that? The shame is not to fail,

Nor is the Victor's laurel everything.

To fight until we fall is to prevail.

Forth, and make firm a highway for the King.

BATTLE-SONG OF FAILURE (continued)

YEA, cast our lives into the ancient slough
 And fall we shouting with uplifted face.
Over the spot where mired we struggle now
Shall march in triumph a transfigured race.
They shall exult where weary we have
 wept —
They shall achieve where we have striven in
 vain,
Leaping in vigour where we faintly crept,
Joyous along the road we paved with pain.
What though we seem to sink in the morass?
Under those unborn feet our dust shall sing
When o'er our failure perfect shall they pass.
Forth, and make firm a highway for the King.

MAGDALEN TO CHRIST

MASTER, what work hast thou for me,—
For me, who turn aside for shame
Before the eyes of my own blame?
Thou seest, Lord.

I see.

THAT shame for me thou shalt endure,
That thou mayst succour souls afraid,
Who would not dare to seek for aid
The mercilessly pure.

BUT must my heart forever show
These scars of unforgotten pain?
May it be never whole again?
Thou knowest, Lord.

I know.

THOSE scars I leave thee for a sign
That bleeding hearts may creep to rest
As on a mother's sheltering breast
On that scarred heart of thine.

BALDUR IN NIFLHEIM

SO long, so long ago I had been slain
By blindness malice-led, I scarce could tell
What soul it was that trod in weary pain
The vestibule of hell.

ONLY at times a sick dream came to me
That once I had been Baldur and erstwhile
The gods in heaven had rejoiced to see
The glory of my smile.

IN the Dim Country's languor I had lost
The way of smiling, and all genial words
Fell dumb at the near breath of Hela's frost
Like winter-smitten birds.

IN that gray land of failure, we who died
Inglorious deaths, nourished our shadowy
shame.
Meeting we turned our downward gaze aside
Before the Stranger came.

BALDUR IN NIFLHEIM (continued)

A CROSS our hush I heard his quick feet ring,
For like a warrior fresh from fight he trod.
I looked him in the eyes, remembering
That I had been a god —

R EMEMBERING that promise of a throne
Upon the ashes of the burnt-out earth,—
A perfect kingdom rising all mine own
From worthlessness to worth.

* * * * *

A SUDDEN laughter shook the still dank air
Like the clear causeless laughter of a
child.
Over its dusky meadows bleak and bare
All the Dim Country smiled,

A ND one went singing in the gloom — “ Be-
hold,
“ Baldur comes down to the dishonoured
dead.
“ What, shall we find the ways too murk
and cold
“ That the Bright God can tread?

BALDUR IN NIFLHEIM (continued)

“**H**ERE in this land of dreams that are no more

“And spent desires, he laughs,— and in his eyes

“In forms more glorious than once they bore

“We see our dead hopes rise.”

“**A**SHERS of earth upon hell’s midden cast,
“From these,” I cried, “shall Baldur build his throne —

“But, oh, the wasted ages that I passed

“Unknowing and unknown —

“**N**AY, was I Baldur till I met thine eyes?
“Thine be the throne!” But, lo, he was not there, —

Only a wakened world, and a surprise
Of morning in the air.

J

IN APRIL

I

LAST year I dreamed of days to be,—
Pale April days when you and I
Should read God's dearest mystery
Joy-blazoned upon earth and sky.
'Tis April now — the robins sing —
New life is green upon the hill —
But you have blossomed with the spring
In violet and daffodil.

2

THE grass grows brighter on a grave;
Oh, fellow-comrades of despair,
Blossom our hearts more blithely brave
For what lies buried there?
The lovelier for hidden grief
Unfolds the spring's green panoply;
And shall the frail, unconscious leaf
More godlike live than we?

A CHURCHYARD IN THE RAIN

Poor passionate hearts that lagged or leapt,
From laughter-hidden wounds that bled,
And now have lain so long unwept
In this green village of the dead,
How loudly to your mirth and pain
Rang your small world of long ago!
Now the low lisping of the rain
Is all the language that you know.

TWO REST-SONGS

"The Body shall return to earth as it was, and the Spirit shall return to God who gave it."

I

WHEN my Body's use at last
Cometh to an ending
Like a well-worn garment past
Patient wisdom's mending,
Hold it then no part of me,
Well as now you love it;
Lay it somewhere quietly
With green earth above it.

LEAVE the wildflowers' native grace
To the tending of the skies
Uncompanioned, in the place
Where my body lies.
Only sometimes feel me near
When your tenderness is moved,
And for messengers of cheer,
Send the flowers I loved.

TWO REST-SONGS (continued)

2

THE sunrise needed scarlet,
The zenith needed blue;
Did God forget, Beloved,
How great my need of you?

NAY, but a need was greater
In some far nook of Space.
Thither has gone in silence
The dearness of your face.

NO star is lost from heaven
Although it seem to fall;
The journey and its ending
Obey the Master's call.

HE sees the Eternal Sequence
We cannot understand;
He sets us where we prosper
The Work that He has planned,

AND though the human vision
With loneliness be dim,
A universe asunder
Our spirits meet in Him.

A PRAYER AT EVENING

NOW angels walk the hills with flaming feet
Along the purple margins of the day.
Father, we beg, who know thy rest is sweet,
Help for the hearts too pain-distraught to
pray.

WE, beckoned to soft beds by kindly sleep,
Yearn toward the fevered watchers for
the light;
Hot, weary eyes that pain's red vigil
keep —
Hearts beating loud through the unquiet
night.

FAITHER, thy love doth bless each peaceful
room —
Shall it not still more tenderly be shown
Where some spent spirit, stumbling in the
gloom,
Pants upward to its Calvary, alone?

BOCKLIN'S PORTRAIT OF HIMSELF WITH DEATH AS A FIDDLER

DEATH like a minstrel sought him playing,
 laying

The summons on his soul as on the strings
The bow, a tender touch caressing, blessing
His spirit with the consciousness of wings.

THE music drew him half unwilling, filling
 His lifted eyes with Heaven's blinding
 beams.

The brush he had so strongly wielded,
 yielded
Futile before the wonder of his dreams.

THEREFORE he followed unrepining, shin-
 ing
With that new light that waited for his touch
To give its beauty mimic being, seeing
This world no loss, which that outweighed
so much.

TUSITALA

WHICH tale of all that you have told
Shall flout Oblivion with "Never!"—
Which song-child of that voice of gold
Shall live forever?

THE tale of one whose dauntless eye
Flashed scorn upon slow-creeping death —
Who sounded his gay battle-cry
With failing breath:

THE song of one whose long despair
For home's lost heathery hills, he spent
In brightening with simple prayer
His banishment.

STRONG soul indomitably sweet,
Behold thy fame's immortal part —
The song whose music was the beat
Of thy brave heart.

THE CHILDLESS

AT Heaven-gate the mothers stood
With earthward-bound, expectant eyes;
The yearning of their motherhood
Had turned their backs on Paradise —
And in the fadeless gardens gay
With angel-mates that made them cheer,
The children asked amid their play,
“ Will Mother soon be here? ”

FROM waiting mothers at the gate,
From waiting children on the lea,
Three Woman-Souls turned desolate
And met beneath the Knowledge Tree.
“ Where is your child? ”

“ There is no child
“ That yearns to me in earth or sky.”
“ You never on a cradle smiled? ”
“ Not I.”

“ Nor I.”

“ Nor I.”

THE CHILDLESS (continued)

“I LONGED, God knoweth —” said the first.
And her lips quivered for a space —
“I thought, am I a thing accurst
“That I should be denied this grace?
“But loud the aching limbs of men
“Unto my hands for healing cried,
“And in the voice of praises then
“Methought my longing died.

“IT did not die — it scarce did sleep;
“Sisters, a woman understands!”
(A tear her eyelids could not keep
Fell bright upon those healing hands)
“New life I brought unto my age
“Before it was my time to die —
“But oh, my wasted heritage!”
“Sister, I know.”
“And I.”

THE ROADSIDE FIRE

THE CHILDLESS (continued)

“**H**AVE I not held beneath my heart
 “ Each of my songs ere it was sung?
 “ Its soul is of mine own a part,
 “ Its body from mine own was wrung
 “ By travail sore as mothers bear — ”
(The second paused with lips compressed,
 And one great tear along her hair
 Rolled down into her breast.)

“**I** CAST me bleeding to the dust
 “ In agony beside the way,
 “ And since create a woman must,
 “ In human forms I shaped the clay
 “ Of roadside dust my blood had wet;
 “ I breathed in them my spirit — oh,
 “ It seemed to me they lived — and yet — ”
 “ Sister, I know.”
 “ I know.”

THE CHILDLESS (continued)

“**N**ONE ever sought me,” said the third;

“ I never heard at eve or morn

“ Across the years the summoning word

“ Of childhood waiting to be born;

“ I yearned to children everywhere —

“ I sought the little wayside weeds

“ And nursed them to a fruitage fair

“ Of honourable deeds,

“**A**ND they — they loved me, too, I know —

“ As I loved them — and yet —” (a
space

All worldless bent the others low

Before the sorrow of her face,

And harvest of those wasted years,

Hot in her eyes and loth to fall,

Gathered the curse of unshed tears,

The bitterest of all.)

THE CHILDLESS (continued)

AND then on still, unhasting feet
One came to them with greeting brief.
Her smile so patient and so sweet
Was sadder than a rain of grief;
And as they looked into her eyes,
Such silence fell upon the three
They heard the songs of Paradise
Beneath the Knowledge Tree.

“**A**ND I — ” she said — “a Child I bore —
“A Child I could not understand.
“I watched Him wander more and more
“Beyond the limits of my land.
“His love was never less toward me,
“But He was All, and I but one —
“He passed unto Humanity,
“And was no more my son.”

AT BETHLEHEM

O MARY, lend thy Babe to me
To hold upon my breast!
It cannot be, it cannot be —
Thy heart would shake his rest.
Beneath thy robe I see it leap —
How in such tumult could he sleep?

G OD'S Mother, shame upon thee now,
So hard and cold to be!
And who art thou — and who art thou
That criest shame on me?
A wasted woman, hungering sore
For the sweet babe I never bore.

N OW for that waste be thine the shame —
Thy sentence thou dost speak;
And for that hunger thine the blame.
Were no lost lambs to seek
Where crowds unseeing pass and press —
No little children motherless?

THE ROADSIDE FIRE

AT BETHLEHEM (continued)

O MARY, let me seek for such!
Mine eyes with tears were blind —
Nay, daughter, seek not overmuch;
Go forth and thou shalt find
Naked and hungry everywhere
The little ones thou didst not bear.

WIPE clear of useless tears thine eyes,
Thy heart of futile dreams.
Go forth to face realities —
One deed of mercy seems
To this my Son and me, more fair
That a whole life of barren prayer.

LOVE not in word but in good sooth;
Deserted and defiled,
Each little human form in truth
Harbours the Eternal Child.
Held in thine arms, His eyes of grace
Shall open to thy bending face.

AT BETHLEHEM (continued)

GOD'S Mother, I have been to blame —
Nay, daughter,— no regret.
Forget thy blame, forget thy shame —
Thy very self forget.
Give wholly thine awakened heart.
My Child hath need of all thou art.

J

HIS MOTHER

SOMEWHERE to-night you lie awake
Bearing your bitterness alone.
I cannot shield,— your heart must take
Its turn to bleed and cower and moan.

WHEN straight you pressed to your desire
And all men spoke your praise, I smiled.
Now naked, smitten, in the mire,
My arms reach out for you, my child.

OH, could I sing you now to sleep,
How strong to-morrow from my breast
To fight and conquer you would leap!
Lord, I keep vigil,— send him rest!

IRISH MOTHERS

THEIR pulses beat the music of the tides
upon the shore,
The kelp-scent fills their nostrils with the
sharpness of the spray,
The very milk we give them has the savour
of the sea,
But our children go away — our children
go away.

OH, the long, long time of waiting with our
eyes upon the door,
Through the whitening of the hedges and
the slash of autumn rain!
Far, far away, they weary for our faces, it
may be,—
Will they never come again — will they
never come again?

ICARUS

HE soared as surely as an eagle does,
Higher and higher toward the zenith still,
And as he rose, a chant came back to us —
An iron monotone of human will
Made audible; when listening was vain
Breathless we followed him with straining
eyes —
Adventurer who claimed for man's domain,
Amazed and impotent, the conquered skies.
“The Prince of Air is tamed! What hin-
ders men,”
We cried, “from traversing the Upper
World
“In quest of unimaginable things?”
From awful silence came the answer then,
As like a challenge at our feet was hurled
Our champion dead, with broken, silenced
wings.

LILITH

HERS is the hour of quiet lamp-lit rest
When thou dost worship at her altar-fire,
That gilds the hearth, and lights her gentle
breast
Where tired with play, thy child has found
his rest —
But I am breathed out of the darkening
west,
A twilight wind of wandering desire.

HERS is the glow of struggle and success,
The battle-hope of noonday and the street.
'Tis for her sake that onward thou dost
press,
Whose smile, like Heaven's, thy victory
shall bless —
But I am in the wistful weariness
That treads the trailing shadow of defeat.

LILITH (continued)

HERS is the night's benignant quieting
When thy protecting arms her sleep en-
fold —

But ere the wakening birds begin to sing,
Because my kiss is a forbidden thing,
The dawn's mysterious lips, like mine, shall
cling
Upon thine own that quiver and grow cold.

THE GHOST-FLOWER

WHY did I pluck the Ghost-flower pale!
Like some young recluse, fasting-frail,
So fair, so fitly placed, it stood
Amid its pallid sisterhood
On the dim margin of the wood.
It scarcely seemed to take its birth
From the same homely, genial earth
That flung the columned trunks between
Such wild exuberance of green.
So supernaturally pure,—
No tint nor fragrance to allure
Caress of butterfly or bee,
It still might stand there, but for me,
Serene in sterile sanctity.
But now — 'tis a corrupted thing,
A blackened shapeless pulp, to fling
Aside, to turn from in disgust —
Poor ruined Saint-flower in the dust!
How should I know a careless touch,
So little meant, could harm so much?
But late regret breeds barren gloom —
And yonder, see! a Rose in bloom —

SHIELA IN THE WEST

WIND that blows from the east, that blows
from the home of my people,
Bring them again to my heart, again to
mine eyes and mine ears;
Bring to my dulling ears the sob of the
waves and my people,
Bring to my dimming eyes the salt of the
waves and their tears.

BLOOD of my people that stirs in me, wild
and cold as the sea,
Blood of a man long dead, the child of a
lone dark star—
How can I speak to the stranger the sor-
rows that rise in me,
Rise and fall like the waves that wash on a
coast afar?

SHIELA IN THE WEST (continued)

WHERE is the hand that shall lead me out
of the stranger's land?

Where does the footstep tarry for which
I listen and long?

Where are the lips of music whose speech
I shall understand?

Where is the man of my people, beautiful,
wild and strong?

WHERE is the man of my people to take me
home to it all,

To bring me again to mine own, peace to
my soul to speak?

Heart of me, how had I answered had
yours been the voice to call,

Changeling child of my people, beautiful,
wild and weak!

A VAGRANT

THERE'S a wildness comes upon me with
the earthy scent of spring;
When the first young larches tassel,
Then the soil demands its vassal,
And I chafe in cot or castle at the time of
bourgeoning.

THEN the broad blue sky above me is the
only roof I need,
And the sudden shower that chills me
And the sun's quick smile that thrills me
And the joy of life that fills me are the
only friends I heed.

THEN I turn the world at pleasure like the
pages of a book—
Past the minster lofty-towered,
Past the cottage rose-embowered,
Past the meadow many-flowered and the
willow-bordered brook.

THE ROADSIDE FIRE

A VAGRANT (continued)

PAST the ruddy little village sunning cheery
on the hill,
Past the town that "vagrant" names me
And the busy boor that blames me,
For the Open Road reclaims me and I yield
me to its will.

THE LOON

WHERE shaken shallows multiply the moon,
Alone amid the silence laughs the Loon.
Heard far away across the night, he seems
Some happy wood-god laughing in his
dreams.

↙

THE STRAYED ELF

MY Mother was the Earth,
My Sister was the Violet;
The place that gave me birth,
A hollow where the grasses met.
There in the silence like a drop of dew,
Among the little wildling folk, I grew.

MY Father was the Sun,
My Brother was a flying Cloud
Who drowsed when day was done
Upon a mountain, where the crowd
Of smiling stars a-tiptoe softly crept
To kiss him to sweet visions while he
slept.

MY home was in a wood,
A wood that opened to the sky —
The world of men is good,
But it is not for such as I!
So often I must long for what has been
And weary, weary, weary for mine own
wild kin!

TUSCAN SONG

PLUCK the violets in the spring,
Pluck the almond blossoms;
Maidens gay, while you may
Wear them on your bosoms.
They will vanish with the spring
Like a dream that closes —
But the summer's hand will fling
On your pathway, roses.

PLUCK the roses thorns and all,
Heavy perfume breathing,
Ere they shed petals red
From your careless wreathing;
Yet should they your grasp escape
There's no cause for sighing —
With the autumn's generous grape
Drink to summer dying.

TUSCAN SONG (continued)

SWEET from every sunny sphere
Where the bloom still lingers,
Juice divine, infant wine,
Stains our eager fingers.
Haste the vintage, for the year
Old and cold is growing,
And the winter brings, my dear,
Only sharp winds blowing.

M AIDENS all, attention lend;
Mark my riddle's reading.
Coy and chill if you will
Hear your first love's pleading;
Take the second for a friend,—
But be wise thereafter
Lest your beauty sadly end,
Lone mid other's laughter.

AN EPITAPH

HERE lies a man whose life was long,
Yet missed the purest joy of life,
For sadly soon his soul grew strong
In battle with this world of strife.
When past his door the children ran,
Wistful he watched their frolic wild.
He was a baby — then a man;
He never was a child.

THE LOSER

I HEARD the scream of a passing train
Across the desert to-day;
It took me back to the town again
And the clatter of old Broadway,
The snatch of a song, the clang of a gong,
The glare from a hundred bars —
Do I envy him still, in this hush and chill,
Galloping under the stars?

THE fight he wins is the fight I lost —
I in my desert camps,
Who hardly save in a year the cost
Of one of his motor-lamps.
My place is not, and my name's forgot
In the world that I once called mine.
Do I greatly care, in this desert air
That is headier far than wine?

THE LOSER (continued)

EVEN his ultimate victory —

Do I grudge him that, at last?

Forever sweet is your smile on me,

My perfect hope of the past!

Forever young, as when first you flung

The spell of your eyes' grey gleam . . .

Do I grudge him the wife of his prosperous
life —

I who have still my Dream?



LIE-AWAKE SONGS

I

PAST my little window
The stars go by all night;
One by one, two by two,
They travel out of sight.

SO many lands to lighten
In such a little while,
They have no time to tarry
For more than just a smile.

PAST my little window
Their pleasant way they take,
To smile on all the children
Who somewhere lie awake.

LIE-AWAKE SONGS (continued)

2

WHEN we go so very far
We have to take the Sleeping-car,
All night long awake I lie
To watch the world go marching by.

POLES on poles go flashing fast,
Strung on miles of shiny wire,
And snorting engines gallop past
Like horses running to a fire.

GREAT big towns with windows bright,
Houses wee with just one light —
So much to see as on we leap,
How can grown folks go to sleep?

NIGHT IN ASSISI

SILENTLY steal the moonlight's cool white
feet

Along the empty street.

Assisi sleeps — what spell constrains her
guest

Whose pillow lies unpressed?

Not memories of old pride and power and
lust —

Mere dust amid the dust

Those men of blood and fire too long have
lain

Ever to live again.

WE watch to see the slender form pass by
Of one who cannot die.

Above him arches like a shrine alight
The jewelled Umbrian night.

Ah, tear-dimmed eyes, and worn ecstatic
face,

And hand upraised to trace
The sign of peace, its sacramental scars
Kissed by the reverent stars.

VENICE

HEAVY her eyes with memories
And dim with dreams of other days
When eager life ran red and gold
Along her tangled water-ways.
Now she is old and worn and cold,
And on her brow the shadow falls
That dankly grey, in dark decay
Steals up her leaning palace-walls.

SHE is as one whose reign is done,
Whose heavy crown is laid aside,
Though still about her shoulders cling
The purple shreds of ancient pride,
And as of old, when for her ring
Her bridegroom sea stretched passionate
hands,
Still thronging meet about her feet
The wanderers of other lands.

VENICE (continued)

BUT not as then, when kings of men
Desired her for her beauty's sake;
She is a faded tourney-queen
For whom no more the lances break,
But round whose knees the children lean,
Breathless, forgetful of their play,
With rapt young eyes where mirrored lies
The splendour lost in long decay.

HER reign is sure while hearts endure,
For love alone her throne sustains.
Drift of the ocean are her ships —
Her aged loveliness remains.
The mother-smile is on the lips
That once the pride of empire curled;
She draws to rest upon her breast
The weary children of the world.

EDINBURGH VIGNETTES

ARGYLL AND MONTROSE IN ST. GILES'

WIDE parted as in life, their marbles lie,
The young man in his beauty, and the old,
Who deeming themselves martyrs, both
were bold
To smile on Death. Beyond our holden
eyes,
Perchance their souls foregather comrade-
wise,
And marvel at the things for which men
die.

EDINBURGH VIGNETTES (continued)

TREES IN THE CASTLE

YEAR after year, Spring storms the citadel
And shakes out her green standards from
the keep
While up the crag her grassy armies creep.
Not all the memory of past winters' power
Avails to sadden that triumphant hour
When year by year she shouts her glad
“All's well!”

EDINBURGH VIGNETTES (continued)

ARTHUR'S SEAT

MOLTEN from hidden agonies of heat
These gnarled grey rocks were hurled into
the light,—
But now their knolls of gilded green are
bright
With children's shining heads; tired limbs
are flung
On the kind turf, and Age whose heart is
young
Smiles upon Youth's new wisdom gravely
sweet.

EDINBURGH VIGNETTES (continued)

QUEEN MARY

HERE where her magic burned with troubled
flame

Through the grey streets her memory sing-
ing goes —

A melody bewilderingly sweet

That stammering strive we vainly to re-
peat —

A secret song whose music no man knows —

That sounds to no two listeners the same.

EDINBURGH VIGNETTES (continued)

GREYFRIARS BOBBY

HE deemed the stone a door that closed had
been

Between his lord and him; in simple trust
That to his waiting ope some day it must,
With pleading tail alert and wistful ears,
A little living prayer, he watched the years
Patiently pass, until Death let him in.

AT CARMARTHEN

DOWN quiet dimpling Towy, with the tide
Coracles drift at twilight, two by two,
Sharing their nets as they were wont to do
When Merlin watched them from the river-side.

Minsters and castles Time has made a spoil,
But still the river bears as once it bore
These fragile shells to ply their simple toil
To music of young voices from the shore.
Along the path the stalwart fishers pass,
Bearing their little boats to launch anew,
And speaking in their own peculiar tongue.
Ghostly their noiseless feet upon the grass;
They fade into the dimness and the dew,
The priesthood of a world forever young.

MICHELANGELO'S PIETA

In St. Peter's

IN that great church which is the heart of Rome,

Amid the rich vast dimness, there is one
Still sheltered spot to which my heart goes home,

Where holding the lax body of her Son
Sits Angelo's crowned Sorrow. On her knees
He lies, no more the people's Wonder-Lord,
But only her dead child; and as she sees
Those wounds she cannot heal, the mystic
sword

Of Love's most impotence at Love's most need,

That pricks all women, strikes her desolate.
Though on those sad wounds that no longer bleed

Her eyes are fixed, in agony too great
For aught but calm, yet turns she silently
That patient palm to God.

THE ROADSIDE FIRE

MICHELANGELO'S PIETA (continued)

“Lo, here is he,
“Thy Son and mine; mine that mysterious
morn
“Of silent silver wonder; mine to know
“A softly stirring marvel yet unborn;
“Mine in the manger — in the tender glow
“Of those first budding years; then — he
was thine.
“Behold him now! He is mine own once
more,
“Passive in death upon this heart of mine
“As in warm sleep his baby limbs I bore.
“Take him — again I give him up to thee.
“Thou art his spirit — take the form I
gave,
“This body, blood and bone and flesh of
me,
“That would be mine though in the deepest
grave —
“He is all thine.”

O heart that holds the sword!
Pray for all mothers, Mother of our Lord!

WHERE LOVE IS

BY the rosy cliffs of Devon, on a green hill's crest,
I would build me a house as a swallow builds its nest;
I would curtain it with roses, and the wind should breathe to me
The sweetness of the roses and the saltiness of the sea.

WHERE the Tuscan olives whiten in the hot blue day
I would hide me from the heat in a little hut of grey,
While the singing of the husbandmen should scale my lattice green
From the golden rows of barley that the poppies blaze between.

WHERE LOVE IS (continued)

NARROW is the street, Dear, and dingy are
the walls

Wherein you wait my coming as the twi-
light falls.

All day with dreams I gild the grime till
at your step I start —

Ah, Love, my country in your arms — my
home upon your heart!

BITTERSWEET

I

BUDS IN AUTUMN

NO wind among the branches grieves—
The leaf lies where it fell;
And see, below the scar it leaves
A bud begins to swell.

NEW joy may from old pain have birth
And buds in autumn start—
But that is in God's generous earth—
Not in a human heart.

BITTERSWEET (continued)

2

IN HIS EYES

IN your clear eyes I fancied I might find
 New dawn of joy upon my pathway cast,
Whose light upon my brow should fling be-
hind

Forevermore the shadows of the past;
But when to-night I looked into your eyes,
My face looked back at me, and there I read,
Patient and pale and pitifully wise
The weary semblance of a love long dead.
Why should we love and suffer, you and I,
Only to learn at last that love can die?

BITTERSWEET (continued)

3

AT THE MIRROR

THE grey like snow in autumn lies
 Too early on my head,
And in my weary, wandering eyes
The dreams have long been dead;

AND yet I am not ill to see
 Although I am not fair;
Many have found their hope in me,
And many their despair.

SOME loved my bad, and some my good,
 And some my outward show —
And one, the heart he understood —
The heart you do not know.

THE ROADSIDE FIRE

BITTERSWEET (continued)

4

IMPOTENT

THE cautious coward in my heart
Shrinks from untrodden ways — and yet
I would that we had never met,
Or else that we might never part.

THE folly of my dreams I see,
Smiling with wise cold eyes — and then
I feel in all the world of men
There is no other mate for me.

IT seems that I have always been
Thus crippled and condemned to wait
Forever crouching at the gate
Where I may never enter in.

BITTERSWEET (continued)

5

THE DAY OF DAYS

A CRY of the weary year—
A flurry of snow on the blast—
And the red-streaked grey of a winter day
Slipping into the past—
But my listening heart can hear
A bird that must sing and sing,
A song of the morn and of Youth re-born,
And of Spring — Spring — Spring!

THE ROADSIDE FIRE

BITTERSWEET (continued)

6

FROM FAR AWAY

OF your day I claim no part,
Not a look, not a touch,
Not a beat of your dear heart —
That were joy too much.

ONLY let me take my place
In your dreams through the night.
I will pass and leave no trace
Ere the east grows bright.

YOU shall waken with a smile,
Smiling still as you muse
How you dreamed of love awhile —
But forgetting whose.

BITTERSWEET (continued)

7

GOOD-BYE

LET us keep our spell unbroken,
Hoard our trove of faery gold.
Safe as death are words unspoken —
Safe is love untold.

LET us learn our lesson bravely;
Sorrow serves the stout of heart.
Came we to our meeting gravely —
Laughing let us part.

BITTERSWEET (continued)

8

COMFORT

WE plucked the flower ere it could fade,
Ere it could die; do you regret?
The pages in whose care we laid
The blossom by are fragrant yet.

NO storm upon it now can beat,
No touch amiss one petal shed.
It is immortal, like the sweet
Remembered kiss of one long dead.

AND though life holds for you and me
One bitter hour of joy denied,
We shall be glad in days to be
We plucked the flower before it died.

BITTERSWEET (continued)

9

THE REST IS SILENCE

GO forth and seek — the world is wide;
Go forth to do and be,
And One shall greet thee like a bride,
A worthy mate for thee.

WHEN thou shalt trample evil down
And set the good above,
She shall award thy labour's crown,
The wonder of her love.

BUT if the evil be too strong
And if thou fail and fall —
If all in vain thou love and long
And she ignore thy call —

WHEN spent and beaten utterly
And sick at soul thou art,
Come back to me,— come back to me
And rest thee in my heart.

MEETING

LIKE a spent swimmer measuring the waves
That mark the strand of safety still un-
won,
And hearing far below the dark sea-caves
Whisper their promise of oblivion,
I fought across the years of bitterness
Toward beaches distant as the sunset-land,
Until at last my aching feet could press
A sweet security of shining sand.
I stood upon the shore of my desire,
Bruised by the savage buffets of the sea
And dripping with its phosphorescent fire,
But safe at last. And then, well known to
me
As my first prayer, on that new coast you
came
With outstretched hands, and called me by
my name.

THE STING OF DEATH

AFTER long pain, I fell asleep;
And then you came, when all the rest
Had wept and gone. You did not weep,
But laid your brow upon my breast
And whispered, "You who do not hear —"
(To me, who made your words my bread!)
"I never knew I loved you, Dear,
"Until they told me you were dead.
"I have been blind, but now I see;
"I love you, love you — for the sake
"Of your long love, come back to me!"
And even then I did not wake.

WORN OUT

YOU played upon my heart as on a lute,
And when you found it answered to your
touch,
Curious, you proved your power overmuch
Nor would you let it rest a moment mute.
At last, so mercilessly fingered o'er,
The weary strings grew slack; now, for your
sake
Or any man's, that listless lute can make
Music, or even discord — nevermore.

NOT GUILTY

I LOVED him; yes, I know.

I had the strength to front him, eye to eye,
And when he cried, "You love me, dear!"
— to lie,

Because I loved him so.

BECAUSE my love was strong

Though my weak flesh was wasted as by
fire

I saved him from his own wild heart's
desire.

My King should do no wrong.

SUCH has my battle been,

And such the measure of my victory.

Which white untested soul that shrinks
from me

Dare call this love a sin?

EMPTY HOUSES

SHUTTERS like lids have decorously closed
The window that was wont to frame your
head;
Its face to decent emptiness composed
Your house lies dead.

IN twilight that forgets the name of dawn
The grey dust gathers in the silent hall;
Outside upon the stretch of weedy lawn
The dead leaves fall.

YET shall this house return to living guise
And smile warm-hearted on the world of
men.
House in my heart, whose dead, blank-shut-
tered eyes
Can never wake again!

A DIALOGUE

LIT by thy lips' ethereal fire,
White flames of God arise in me.
I hear the voice of old desire
That sighs in me, that sighs in me.
Thine eyes hold Joy's immortal lore —
I gaze and sorrow dies in me.
The bitterness that once I bore
Still cries in me, still cries in me.
Thou art imperishable Youth —
Men turn as by a spell to thee.
The old, old tale of tarnished truth
I tell to thee, I tell to thee.
Life that doth aureole thy head
My being doth compel to thee.
Nay, for my place is with the dead —
Farewell to thee — farewell to thee.

RUDEL SINGS OF HIS LADY

SHE is the goal and the desire;
She is the altar and the fire;
The body of Love and the soul thereof,
And she will hear me when I speak.
She is the hope and the fulfilling;
She is the tempest and the stilling;
She is the doing and the willing,
And I shall find her when I seek.

SHE is the passion and the peace;
She is the bond and the release;
The laughter and tears of the vanished years,
And she will know me when we meet.
She is the striving and the winning;
She is the penance and the sinning;
She is the end and the beginning,
And I shall kneel before her feet.

THE ROADSIDE FIRE

RUDEL SINGS OF HIS LADY (continued)

SHE is the glory and the shame;
She is the guerdon and the blame;
The chastening rod and the ruth of God,
And she will lift me up to bliss.
Then end together song and sighing,
And let me die, if in my dying
Upon her perfect bosom lying
I yield my spirit to her kiss.

COSTANZA

IN the sun I sat and spun,
Dreaming of a wedding-gown,—
For youth and love were in the air
That day you wandered through our town.

THROUGH the town, your eyes of brown
Smiled on all they chanced to see.
I sat among the lilacs there —
Passing, you smiled on them and me.

SMILED on me so carelessly —
Went your way nor glanced again.
A world of women claimed your care;
You left for me no other men.

THE UNFULFILLED

IN sleep's uncertain borderland
Where dreams by thousands come and go,
Two heart to heart forever stand
Curtained by clouds of whirling snow.

“**N**OTHING in dreams too great to
dare —”
“This clothes with joy the shivering
years
“When in my eyes my soul stood
bare —”
I woke at first with bitter tears;

BUT now the wakening brings no start.
I smile, remembering the day
Silent, I offered you my heart,
And you in silence turned away.

THE ROADSIDE FIRE

TO A YOUNG GIRL

YOU touch me to a tenderness
Too deep for you to know:
A mother smiles and sighs to trace
The embers of her girlhood grace
Rekindled in her daughter's face —
I brood upon you so.

I LAY about you thoughts that bless,
For in your eyes' pure glow
The hope that was my youth I see,
And warm my chilled heart eagerly
At the same dream that died in me —
Lord Love, how long ago!

THE SPRING—AND YOU

SO shyly came the Spring this year,
We knew not when it came;
We scarce had thought it might be near,
When lo, the boughs aflame

WITH tremulous gold and crimson fires—
Spring Beauty starred the lawn.
Like children's laughter were the choirs
Of waking birds at dawn;

AND while we stared as in a dream,
And wondered if 'twere true,
Merry with cowslips was the stream,
And all the roadside blue.

ERE we could triumph in the first
Lone, long-expected flower,
It seemed the frozen world had burst
To blossom in an hour.

THE ROADSIDE FIRE

THE SPRING—AND YOU (continued)

L IKE Spring you stole upon me, dear —
I knew not when nor how.
I only know that you are here,
And life's in blossom now.

PARTNERSHIP

YOUR eyes the dawn that gives me wing
To rise my best,
And mine the twilight stars that bring
Your hour of rest.

YOUR hands our common strength to do
Bright deeds and bold,
And mine your life's great rudder true
By faith to hold.

YOUR breast my shelter from the dread
Of days too dreary,
And mine a pillow for your head
When you grow weary.

THUS linked, to meet in comrade-trust
Each changing hour,
And at the end, to know our dust
Merged in one flower.

AFTERWARD

WHEN weary soul and body are at rest,
 Dream not your head is pillow'd on my
 breast
Lightly, and yet so close that you can hear
My heart, and feel my half-unconscious
 kiss
Upon your drowsy lids — ah, dream not
 this!
You would but waken — and remember,
 Dear.

DREAM rather I have kept the old-time vow
 Made half in jest — do you recall it now?
And from the Silence have come back to you
To watch beside you for our love's dear
 sake,
And bless you as you sleep. Then do not
 wake,
Beloved, but dream on — that dream is true.

TO HER—UNSPOKEN

GO to him, ah, go to him, and lift your eyes aglow to him;

Fear not royally to give whatever he may claim.

All your spirit's treasury scruple not to show to him.

He is noble—meet him with a pride too high for shame.

SAY to him, ah, say to him that soul and body sway to him;

Cast away the cowardice that counsels you to flight,

Lest you turn at last to find that you have lost the way to him—

Lest you stretch your arms in vain across a starless night.

THE ROADSIDE FIRE

TO HER — UNSPOKEN (continued)

BE to him, ah, be to him the key that sets
joy free to him —

Teach him all the tenderness that only love
can know —

And if ever there should come a memory of
me to him,

Bid him judge me gently for the sake of
long ago.

THE UNKNOWN GOD

I BUILT of dreams a temple cool and white;
I shut from human sight its halls untrod,
And kindled me a small expectant light
Upon an altar to the Unknown God.

BUT in my folly I was not content
To wait his coming by the perfumed
flame;
Vainly to seek him in the world I went
That in my worship I might speak his name.

I FOLLOWED wandering fires and often lost
The path I trod too eagerly to see;
After long years I learned at bitter cost
How little all my pains might profit me.

WHEN to my temple I crept home at last
Marred was its beauty — soiled and
smeared with clay
Where feet profane the unguarded door
had passed,
And the unintended fire in ashes lay.

THE ROADSIDE FIRE

THE UNKNOWN GOD (continued)

NOW to the Road the door stands open wide
And cuts the darkness with a sword of
light

That weary wayfarers may turn aside
And find within a lodging for the night.

THE altar-fire glows generous and warm,
And even now a pilgrim leaden-shod
With weariness, takes refuge from the
storm.

.
Lo, in his temple stands the Unknown God.

THE PATTERAN

YOU set the Patteran for me
Along the world you wandered through,
Lest mazed and weary I might be
And miss the way that led to you.

HOW oft at open doors aglow
Have I delayed my restless feet
And wondered, "Shall I further go?"
For just a hungry heart's quick beat,

WHEN on the threshold I have seen
Your woodland signal where it lay
With onward-pointing finger green
To warn me that I might not stay.

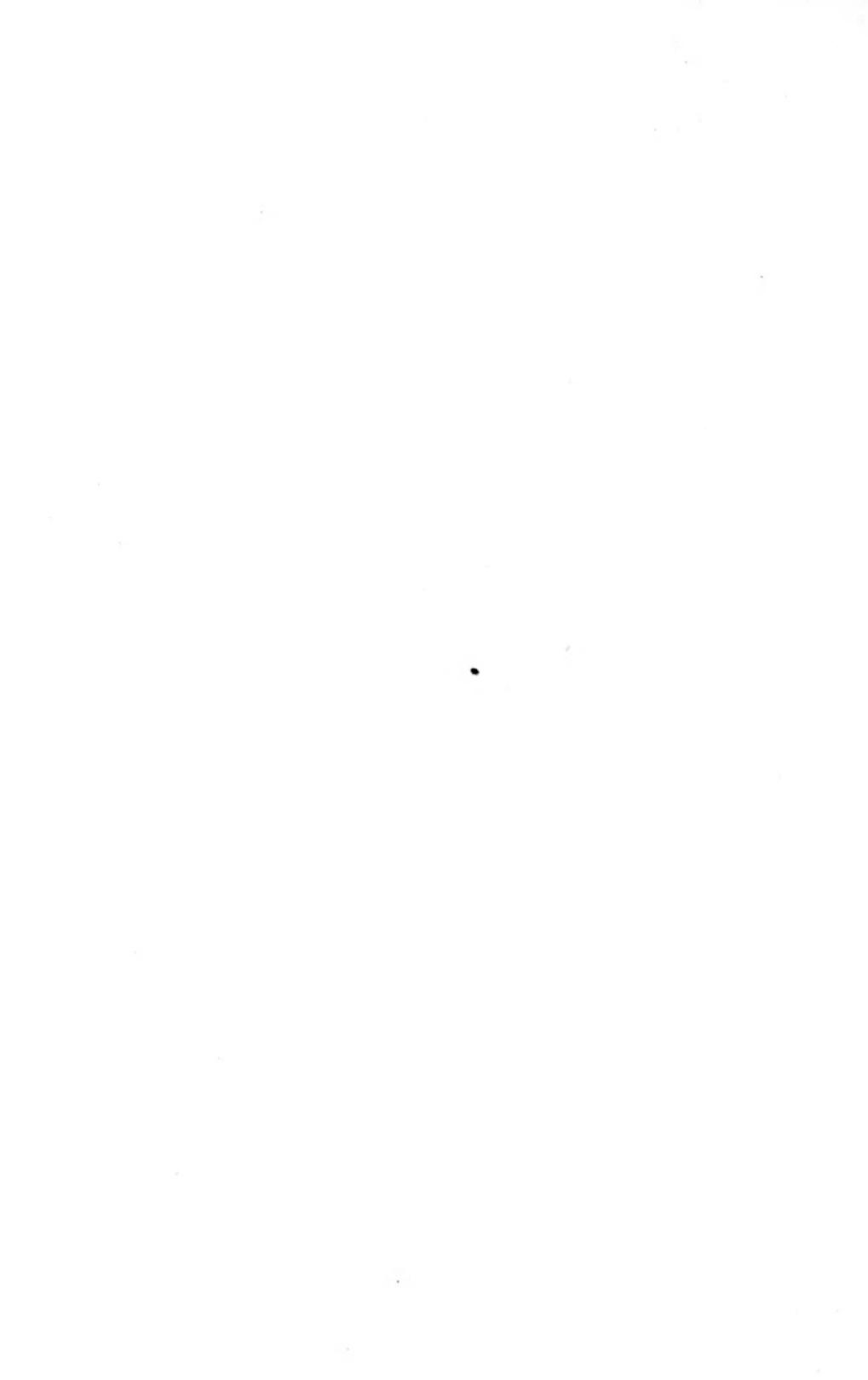
THE Gypsy knew the Gypsy's call —
It led my wayward feet aright.
Together as the shadows fall
We kneel our roadside fire to light.

THE ROADSIDE FIRE

THE PATTERAN (continued)

THE fire we kindle, hand to hand
Shall cheer the way for weary men,
Till our great Chieftain give command
"Break camp and take the road again."

THEN, Love, whoever goes before,
If it be you, if it be I,
Shall set the Patteran once more
Across the spaces of the sky.





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